Renegade Press

PRESENTS

2.00 IN CANADA 1.70 IN U.S.

WORD SMITH

3 DEC

A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

What happens when an accountant and a commercial illustrator in Toronto, Canada, decide to get together and do *their* version of the world in the 1950s? What if that world is done according to, not history, but the science-fiction movies of that time period? What happens is *The Silent Invasion*, a new series coming from Renegade Press in the spring of 1986. And it isn't as simplistic as I make it sound. The series is, in fact, an affectionate look at the fifties style of science fiction, when the UFO scare was a big event in the newspapers.

Some of you who read *Cerebus* a year or two back may remember Michael Cherkas and Larry Hancock (the creators of *The Silent Invasion* from a Dick Mallet story in *Unique Stories*. It was in the January 1983 issue, with another Dick Mallet story appearing in *Cerebus* #68-70. By the time of the second story's appearance, I was making plans to start Renegade Press, and Michael and Larry were hoping to sell me a series. Since Dick Mallet is a detective, and *Ms. Tree* was already in the line-up, I didn't feel that Mallet would be the right choice. So they showed me several other ideas, and one caught my attention. Well, here it is, almost a year and a half later, and *The Silent Invasion* will soon become a reality. The story is about alien invasions, political paranoia, and life in the fifties. It's a science-fiction/mystery told with a sense of humor and a lot of affection for the era. The art style is also something that attracted me to the series. Michael's willingness, in fact his insistence on experimentation gives a viewer of his art a great deal of satisfaction. While working on the second Dick Mallet story, Michael told me that he wanted to try a different approach. First, he used soft-leaded pencils for the page, then he altered their appearance by carefully controlling development of the stats of each page. The stat would then become the finished art. The end result was indeed different from anything on the market at that time. With *The Silent Invasion*, Michael has taken yet another approach using very strong graphic contrast to create an almost symbolic representation without losing any of the looseness that marked his earlier work. I think you are going to enjoy *The Silent Invasion*, and I am greatly looking forward to your comments this spring when it debuts. The first issue will ship the end of March.

On another subject, next issue I am doing something a bit different in this space. A few months ago, the folks at Fantagraphics asked me to participate in a new feature in *The Comics Journal* called "The Executive's Forum." The idea behind it was to give the various publishers (and their representatives) in this field a place, outside their own publications, to address topics of importance to them. If you have ever been curious about what the people "behind the scenes" think about, I would suggest that you check this out. So far, almost every company has agreed to participate, and the range of topics has proven quite interesting. I decided to try to address a subject that I have only just discovered in the last year: the growing problem of illiteracy. I wanted to address it as both a member of society in general and comics fandom in particular. The essay will be reprinted here next issue. Please consider what it says.

Finally, it is early November as I write this. When you read this, it will be December and Christmas. When I walk through my neighborhood, I notice that some of the leaves have begun to turn red, and it's cool enough that you need to wear a light jacket. Today it rained steadily enough to have me believe it will for a few days. It may not be the winter I have come to know the last fifteen years in Canada, but it is a change of seasons. The funny thing is, I already accept it as Southern California's version of winter, because it is a definite contrast to the hot dry summer. I do miss a few things, as autumn has a very special feel to it in the northern climates. However, many of the feelings remain the same regardless of the locale. The message is certainly the same. With the warmest of regards, I wish to all of you—a very Merry Christmas!!

Deni

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WORD SMITH

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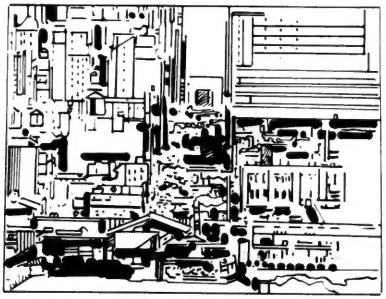
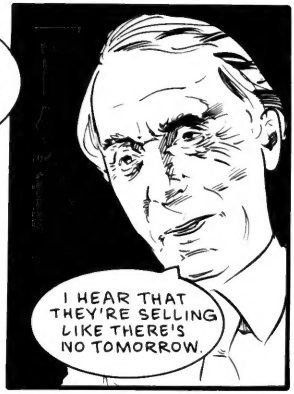
FILE IT UNDER "P"
HE'S GOT TO BE A MYSTERIOUS CRIME-FIGHTER.
HE'S GOT TO WORK IN A BIG CITY AND FIGHT CRIMINAL MASTER MINDS.
STORY - DAVE DARRIGO ART - R.G. TAYLOR
LETTERS - L. TAYLOR
PULP LOGOS - STEVE LEBLANC



THIS DAY SEEMED LIKE ANY OTHER DAY TO THE EMPLOYEES OF ROYAL PUBLICATIONS. AND IT WAS, EXCEPT IN THE MIND OF ROYAL'S 'GUIDING LIGHT' – ITS PUBLISHER.



... THE BAD GUYS FOLLOW THEM AND BLOW UP THE OPENING...
SO, HE SAVES THE GIRL AND THEY RIDE OFF TO THE MINE....
BEEEP!
HOW DO THEY GET OUT OF THE MINE?
HEY, MAC. WATCH OUT!
HUH?!
GOD, THAT WAS CLOSE!
SCREECH!
IS HE ALL RIGHT?
YES. THE CAR STOPPED IN TIME.
YOU SHOULD PAY MORE ATTENTION TO WHERE —
I'M SORRY. IT WAS MY FAULT.
HOLD IT, MORRIS. I KNOW THAT MAN... HI, CLAY. IT'S ME. DOMINIC GENTILLO.

DOM! I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU SINCE SCHOOL. HOW ARE YOU?
FINE... CLAY IS AN OLD SCHOOL CHUM OF MINE, MORRIS. WE WENT TO N.Y.U. TOGETHER.
THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME I'VE ALMOST BEEN SQUASHED. I FEEL LIKE A REAL IDIOT.
IT COULD'VE BEEN WORSE... CAN I GIVE YOU A LIFT?
I GOT INTO DOM'S LIMO AND HE GAVE MORRIS MY HOME ADDRESS.
ARE YOU STILL WRITING, CLAY?
YES. IT'S NOT GREAT LITERATURE, BUT I ENJOY THE WORK.

I WRITE STORIES FOR THOSE DIME STORY MAGAZINES.
OH? I'VE SEEN SOME OF THOSE 'SHADOW' MAGAZINES. HE MUST BE A BIG SELLER FOR HIS PUBLISHER
HE IS
YOU LOOK TIRED, DOM. ARE YOU TROUBLED ABOUT SOMETHING? YOUR BUSINESS?
YEAH... WHERE IS SOMEBODY LIKE THE SHADOW WHEN YOU NEED HIM, HUH?
WHY DO YOU SAY A CRAZY THING LIKE THAT?
HAVE YOU HEARD OF 'THE BLACK HAND'?
YEAH.
THEY'RE EXTORTING MONEY FROM ME.
CAN'T YOU FIGHT THEM?
HOW, CLAY? HOW? I'M NOT A HERO. THE POLICE ARE HELPLESS — AND THEY DON'T CARE ABOUT US WOPS, ANYWAY.

YOU CAN'T LET THOSE BASTARDS GET AWAY WITH THIS!
I'VE GOT A WIFE AND KIDS. I'VE GOT TO PAY... WHAT'S THE USE? YOU CAN'T GET AHEAD IN THIS WORLD WITHOUT MAKING ENEMIES.
I'LL JUST HAVE TO LIVE WITH THAT FACT.
THAT'S A LOUSY, STINKING FACT TO HAVE TO LIVE WITH.
THAT'S MY PLACE JUST AHEAD.
PULL OVER, MORRIS.
I'M SORRY TO BURDEN YOU WITH MY PROBLEMS, CLAY. THINGS AREN'T REALLY TOO BAD. I'LL MUCK ALONG SOMEHOW... 'BYE.
WHAT A ROTTEN STATE OF AFFAIRS.
DOM DOESN'T DESERVE ALL THIS. HE'S ONLY A SMALL ITALIAN-LANGUAGE PUBLISHER. HE'S WEALTHY - BUT HE'S NO ROCKEFELLER.

GODDAM IT! I FEEL SO HELPLESS... WHAT A DIRTY, STINKING WORLD OUT THERE! I HATE CRIMINALS! CURSE THEM! CURSE THEM ALL!
THUD
DOM WAS SO RESIGNED TO IT. HE JUST TRIES TO SHRUG IT OFF - AS IF IT'S PART OF HIS BUSINESS. NO-ONE SHOULD HAVE TO LIVE THAT WAY.
NOW I KNOW WHY HEROES LIKE THE SHADOW ARE SO POPULAR. I'D LOVE TO PUT ON A HAT AND A CLOAK AND START SHOOTING .45's AT SOME CROOKS RIGHT NOW.
I'M GOING TO MAKE A SANDWICH.
BRRING
CLAY. IT'S SAM KAISER.
IF YOU EVER HAD ANY 'MYSTERY MAN' TYPE OF CHARACTERS NOW'S THE TIME TO PULL THEM OUT OF YOUR HAT.
MY PUBLISHER WANTS TO ENTER THE SHADOW SWEEPSTAKES.

IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG FOR ME TO INVENT MY MYSTERY MAN HERO. SOON I HAD CREATED 'THE DOMINO DETECTIVE!' DOMINIC GENTILLO WAS GOING TO FIGHT THE BLACK HAND - NOT IN FACT, BUT IN FICTION!
HE'S A CRUSADING NEWSPAPER PUBLISHER. FIGHTING CROOKS WITH WORDS IN HIS PAPER...
BUT WHEN WORDS AREN'T AS EFFECTIVE AS ACTIONS HE LEAVES HIS OFFICE..
AND MEETS HIS CHAUFFEUR, WHO IS ALSO HIS PARTNER.
" Got a special project for us, sir?" the negro driver asked.
"Yes, Morris. Let's go to the garage."
"I've received a tip," Dominic told Morris as they drove through the city. "Earl Kent, the banker for the Dockside Mob—"
"—is making a financial transaction today."
"An illegal transaction, sir?" Morris asked as he navigated into the secret garage.
Morris parked beside the sleek, navy blue roadster.
"No" Dominic replied. "He's simply buying stocks and bonds worth half a million dollars."

"But, every penny he spends has been gained through robbery, extortion and blackmail. And I intend to get that money - and give it back to his victims."

The Blue Charger lunged out of the garage, propelling the Domino Detective into action!

The Charger whizzed through the concrete canyons of the city. The masked man arrived in time to wait in the shadows and scout the scene.

The Domino Detective returned to the Charger. "I want you to drive up to the curb as soon as they ascend the steps, Morris," he ordered his partner. "Keep the motor running and be ready for a fast exit."

The Charger pulled to the curb. Domino opened his door and dropped to a crouch, his .45 held steady at Kent's heart. "Throw me that briefcase, Kent!"

"Stop him, boys!" Kent barked. The bodyguards pulled their rods, but the masked man deftly shot them from their grips.

"You're a vile leach," Domino said to Kent as his gloved fist connected with the crook's jaw. "As bad as all your breed are."

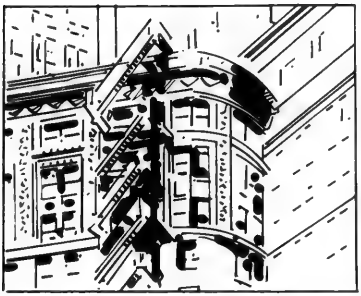
The masked man took the case of money –

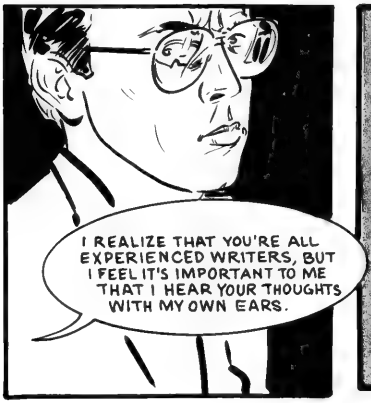
– and ran to the Charger.

The modern Robin Hood was pleased with his success. Then Morris said, "We've got trouble, sir. The police have spotted us."

Nothing on wheels was as fast as the Blue Charger.
The police tried in vain to catch the masked man and his driver.
Morris piloted the roadster to safety.
The secret door was revealed and Domino entered.
Police Commissioner Simmons greeted the masked man.
HE PUTS THE BRIEFCASE ON SIMMONS' DESK AND SAYS, "I WANT YOU TO HOLD THIS MONEY, PAUL..."
"...UNTIL I CAN RETURN IT TO ITS RIGHTFUL OWNERS."
AND ONE OF THOSE OWNERS IS A GUY NAMED DOMINIC GENTILLO.

TWO DAYS LATER I ARRIVED AT THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLISHER WITH MY IDEA AND THE SAMPLE CHAPTERS.





THE PUBLISHER TOOK NOTES AS I TALKED ABOUT THE DOMINIC — SORRY, THE DOMINO DETECTIVE.

MY CHARACTER IS CALLED 'THE NIGHT FIGHTER'. I SEE HIM AS A CROSS BETWEEN THE LONE RANGER AND DOC SAVAGE.
The NIGHT FIGHTER
HE'S A MILLIONAIRE INDUSTRIALIST WHO TRAVELS THE WORLD THROUGH HIS BUSINESS AFFAIRS, BUT HE ALSO CRAVES ADVENTURE AND DANGER
IN HIS FIRST ADVENTURE HE TRAVELS TO EGYPT AND FIGHTS A RELIGIOUS CULT WHO HAVE SECRETLY MOVED INTO ONE OF THE PYRAMIDS AND ARE USING IT AS A BASE FOR THEIR KIDNAPPING OPERATIONS.

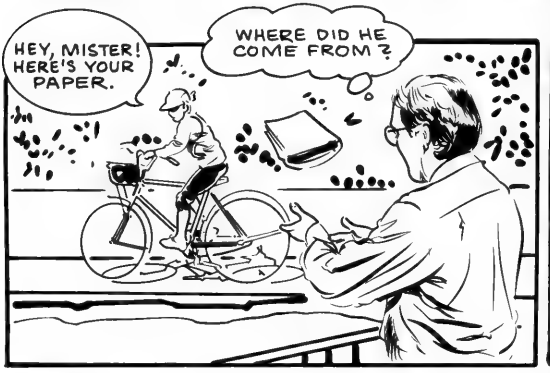
SAM INTRODUCED BILLY BLOOMFIELD NEXT.
I THINK YOU'LL REALLY LIKE MY HERO. I CALL HIM 'MISTER MYSTERY'
MISTER MYSTERY
HE'S NOT ONLY A CRIME FIGHTER BUT HE'S ALSO A WARLOCK. HE USES HIS MYSTICAL POWERS AS A SORCERER TO BATTLE CROOKS
HE HAS AN ARCH-ENEMY CALLED THE DEADLY DRUID... BUT, DON'T GET ME WRONG. THIS ISN'T A HERO FOR 'WEIRD TALES'.

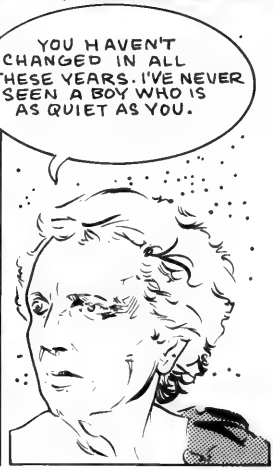
THANKS, BILLY... AND KEN, AND CLAY. WE'RE GOING TO EVALUATE YOUR IDEAS NOW.
IF YOU WANT TO GO OUT AND GRAB A BITE TO EAT FOR AN HOUR OR SO. WHEN YOU COME BACK WE'LL HAVE MADE OUR DECISION.
WELL, SAM. WHAT DO YOU THINK?
YEAH, I SUPPOSE SO BUT TELL HIM TO MAKE THE HERO ENGLISH, WILL YOU?
OKAY
NONE OF THEM REALLY GIVE ME GOOSE-BUMPS, BUT THE DOMINO DETECTIVE IS THE CLOSEST TO WHAT WE WANT.
LATER.
COME IN.
SIT DOWN, CLAY.
THANKS.
THEY CALLED ME IN HERE FIRST. I GUESS THAT MEANS I WAS THE THIRD RUNNER-UP.

IT'S TOO BAD. I DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO POLISH THE IDEA AS MUCH AS I WANTED...
...BUT I LIKED HAVING DOM AND HIS CHAUFFEUR AS THE HEROES. IT WAS POETIC JUSTICE.
WELL...
...WE'VE DECIDED TO GO WITH YOUR IDEA.
GREAT!
BUT THE PUBLISHER WANTS YOU TO CHANGE THE HERO'S REAL NAME, SO THAT HE'S NOT ITALIAN.
WELL, I BASED IT ALL ON A FRIEND—. DOES IT REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE?
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL? JUST CHANGE HIS NAME AND THEN YOU'VE GOT YOUR OWN MAGAZINE.
THAT'S WHAT YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR.
ISN'T IT?
CAN'T YOU CHANGE HIS NAME? IT'S A SIMPLE REQUEST.
THIS WHOLE IDEA IS BASED ON A GUY I KNOW. HE'S ITALIAN.
COME ON, CLAY. ITALIANS IN STORIES ARE EITHER GIGOLOS, OPERA SINGERS OR GANGSTERS...THEY'RE NOT NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS.

THE NEXT DAY I TOOK A CAB OUT TO SEE MY PARENTS.

THEY HAD A HUMBLE HOME OUT IN WOODSIDE. I DIDN'T VISIT THEM VERY OFTEN. THEY RARELY ASKED ME TO VISIT THEM ANYWAY. WE DIDN'T HAVE MUCH TO TALK ABOUT.

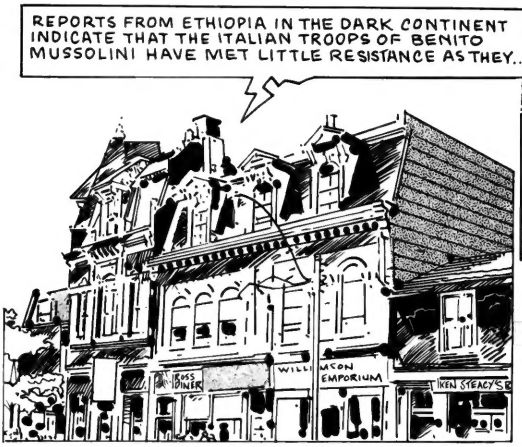




HI, DAD... MMMM THIS SMELLS GOOD.
IS THE EVENING PAPER HERE?
IT'S OVER ON THE COUCH.
LOOKS LIKE THERE'S GOING TO BE A WAR IN AFRICA.
HMMPF. I CAN'T FIGURE THOSE WOPS. WHAT GOOD IS AFRICA TO THEM?
HE MAY BE GETTING OLDER, BUT HE'S NOT GETTING ANY WISER.
WE THANK THE LORD FOR HIS BLESSINGS AND BOUNTY. WE PRAY FOR THOSE LESS FORTUNATE THAN OURSELVES. MAY THE LORD HELP THEM... AMEN.
AMEN
WHERE DID HE GET A STUPID PRAYER LIKE THAT?

SO, OUT OF THREE PROPOSALS THEY LIKED MINE THE BEST.
I'LL FINALLY GET MY OWN MAGAZINE.
DOES THIS MEAN YOU'LL GET MORE MONEY?
NO. BUT I WON'T HAVE TO FREE-LANCE ANY MORE. I'LL HAVE A STEADY INCOME.
THAT'S NICE. ISN'T THAT NICE, HORACE?
HUH? YEAH, I GUESS SO.
YOU GONNA HAVE A PEN-NAME WITH THIS ONE? JUST ONCE I'D LIKE TO SEE MY SON'S OWN NAME ON A BOOK.
WHAT DO YOU CARE? YOU DON'T READ MY STUFF ANYWAY
THE NEXT DAY I WAS BACK AT THE ROYAL OFFICES. I WASN'T EXPECTED. I WAS DEAD ON MY FEET AFTER WORKING THROUGH THE NIGHT.
SAM ISN'T GOING TO LIKE THIS.
BUT IF THEY WON'T USE A CHARACTER THE WAY I INVENT HIM THEN THEY WON'T GET TO USE HIM AT ALL.

WHAT'S THIS?
IT'S CALLED THE BLACK KNIGHT. I THINK YOU'LL LIKE IT BETTER THAN THE DOMINO DETECTIVE.
THE BLACK KNIGHT, HUH?
DON'T TELL ME - YOU'VE MADE THE NEGRO CHAUFFEUR INTO THE HERO, NOW. RIGHT?
WRONG. COME ON, SAM.
COME ON, CLAY. ITS TOO LATE TO GIVE US A NEW IDEA.
WHAT THE HELL'S THE MATTER WITH YOU? CAN'T YOU THINK UP ONE CHARACTER'S NAME? HOW ABOUT... TODD? TODD STREET. THAT'S A GOOD NAME. USE THAT ONE.
WHAT HAVE YOU GOT AGAINST ITALIANS?
NOTHING!
CORRECT ME IF I'M WRONG, BUT ISN'T THE MAYOR OF THIS CITY AN ITALIAN!
YEAH, I KNOW, BUT -
LOOK, SAM. IT'S IMPORTANT TO ME THAT THE HERO BE THE SAME PERSON WHO INSPIRED THE IDEA.


REPORTS FROM ETHIOPIA IN THE DARK CONTINENT INDICATE THAT THE ITALIAN TROOPS OF BENITO MUSSOLINI HAVE MET LITTLE RESISTANCE AS THEY...
KISS DINER
WILLIAMSON EMPORIUM
IKEN STEACY'S

I MIGHT AS WELL FILE THIS IDEA AWAY FOR GOOD... I'M FILING IT UNDER 'D', FOR DOMINO DETECTIVE, BUT I SHOULD BE FILING IT UNDER 'P', FOR PREJUDICE.

AUTHOR'S NOTE:
THE GREEN HORNET DEBUTED ON RADIO IN JANUARY, 1936. THIS STORY TAKES PLACE IN LATE SEPTEMBER/EARLY OCTOBER, 1935.

PULP FEVER

LOGO BY RON HOBBS

Send Letters to: PULP FEVER, c/o Dragon Lady Comic Shop, 200 Queen St. W., Toronto, Ontario M5V 1Z2

A Note from Dave:
As you might expect from a comic about a writer we've received many literate responses to the book. Some have been long and heart-felt—and the one on this page is certainly no exception. The author of this letter is also very entertaining and, thus, we wanted to print his letter in its entirety. We'll have 2 or 3 pages of letters next issue.

To Dave and R.G.:

"What's it called?"

"Wordsmith."

"What's it about?"

"This guy who writes for all the old pulps in the thirties."

"The what?"

"The pulps. C'mon, you know! **The Shadow! The Spider! Doc Savage!** Those guys. The ones that inspired all your modern heroes."

"Oh—like the really old **Batman** and **Capt. America?"**

"Sort of. Yeah."

"What else does he do?"

"What do you mean, what else?"

"Well, what are his super-powers?"

"He's a writer. He doesn't have any bleeding super-powers."

"Oh. You mean, like Batman or Capt. America. He just puts on his costume and uses his olympic level strength and training to—"

"No, no, no! He doesn't dress up in any costume!"

"You mean he goes out in disguise and—"

"He doesn't go OUT! He writes goddamn stories!"

"But when does he fight any villains or—"

"He doesn't fight ANYBODY!"

"Well, what does he do, then? Anything?"

"He WRITES STORIES, you illiterate mud-clot! He puts words on paper! He weaves illusions! Life and Death dramas of Good versus Evil! Adventure! Excitement! Exotic places and mysterious characters! WORDS! You know what words are, you retarded limpet? They're those scraggly things hanging over **Dr. Doom's** head while he's frying the **Fantastic** bloody **Four** in his thirty-two foot diameter nuclear-powered wok!"

"Well, you don't have to get snotty about it."

"Sorry..."

"Anyway, sounds pretty stupid to me. I'd rather read the comic about the giant wok."

"God, have mercy..."

The last time—the only other time—I sat down at my Apple and wrote a letter to issue #1 of a comic magazine was nearly two years ago, for **Power Pack.** I was entranced by the concept of super-powered rugrats. I kinda dumped a mess of ideas and opinions on poor Louise Simonson and June Brigman, and tried to make sure that there was at least one letter a month adressed to, what for Marvel, was a fairly daring project. I needn't have worried; Power Pack has become a pretty stable member of Marvel's lineup. Of course, they've done it by making the comic a mainline product, complete with its own (bleach) resident mutant, but that's the subject of another letter to them, not you.

What I wanted to say was that I just read what may well be the last issue of **Zot!**, and I'm ashamed that it took me too long to find out about that book, and that it was too late to write Scot McCloud to let him know how much I appreciated his efforts. No, not just ashamed: I'm also too lazy. I owe letters to Mike Grell for **Jon Sable, Freelance** and to Doug Moench for **Aztec Ace** and to **Thunderbunny** and several others...not to D.S. for **Cerebus,** though. 'Aardvark Comments' is verschmelt enough without one of my letters. Like this one. (You're probably still wondering why I wrote you. I'll get there. It takes me a little while and a glass or three of Wild Turkey before I usually settle down. Ask Weezy.)

See, I'm currently on an anti-superhero kick. DC's return to the **Superman** of the fifties, or John Byrne's return to the "original" **F.F.** and **Hulk,** or giving Roy Thomas full freedom with the **Justice Society** and all of Earth Two (while it lasts) to play with, just aren't enough. The "kid in the bunny suit" and the appearance of **Mr. Monster** have convinced me of that. Or take Alan Moore's work. It's all made me even more sure that having a novel superhero, or any kind of superhero at all, is secondary to the basics—good characters and good story.

So, out with the superhero! I give you the non-superhero! They are few and, woefully, far between in a market aimed at pre-teen 'X-Junkies'. There is Cerebus, and Jon Sable and **Nathaniel Dusk** and **Mr. X,** with **Swamp Thing** and Aztec Ace just borderline. And you know what? These characters' stories are my favorites. So, finding another one to add to my list is a delight.

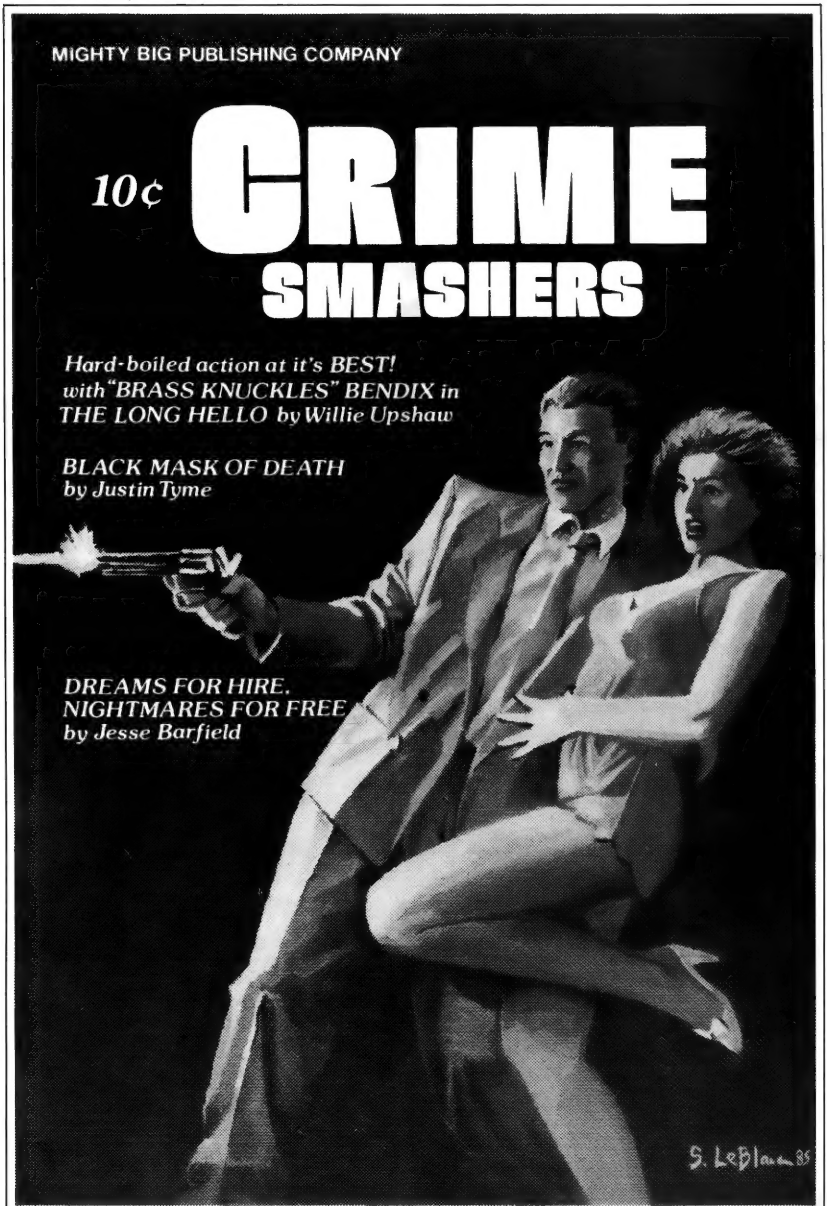
Which is to say: Wordsmith. (Although you could have called it "Alias, Yours Truly." I like that. I like a number of things. Some of them legal. Some almost even tasteful.) It's a daring project much more than Power Pack or all the rest of them. It's existence almost in itself justifies Renegade's existence in an already glutted market. We need the alternatives, and this book almost counts for two. My praises to Renegade for going for it, and while I still have a chance: all my wishes to Mr. Darrigo, Mr. Taylor and Mr. Washburn, and my hopes that we'll get a long taste of the penny dreadfuls, Thirties atmosphere, and one man's search for Truth, Justice and—how to complete this last friggin' sentence without having to gratuitously split his infinitives...

By the by, the way you got Congo Carson out of that tiger trap—smashing! If the Public overlooks goodies like that, they deserve their self-inflicted brain death. Pardon me; that's a harsh note to end with. Rather this—Wordsmith forever!

David O. Bringen
Edina, Minnesota

You mention many comic titles, David—but most of them are still color books. If Wordsmith is helping to ween you off color to black and whites then we're happy. We feel that the real cutting edge in comics today is found in non-color formats.

PULP PIN-UP



BY STEVE LEBLANC

THE PULP FILE

by Don Hutchison

Father of the Flying Spy

Mention the name Robert J. Hogan in even the most astute of literary circles, and the chances are you'll draw a blank. Yet, when Hogan died in 1963, his obituary noted that he had been one of the most prolific writers in America. The answer to this seeming msytery is that Hogan was little known outside of the pulp magazines, where he wrote literally hundreds of novels and short stories of all varieties. In pulp circles he is still fondly remembered as the author of the high-flying G-8 stories.

Debuting in October of 1933, Hogan's **G-8 AND HIS BATTLE ACES** magazine ran for an incredible 110 issues, each number of featuring a collision-course adventure in the career of the World War One master spy and aviator. For over a decade, while one air war pulp after another went spiralling down, G-8 winged on, carrying his fight with the Kaiser's minions into the heart of World War Two.

Strangely enough the **BATTLE ACES** magazine preceded the debut of G-8 by some three years. The first sky pulp, **AIR STORIES,** was released in May 1927, anticipating the month when Charles Lindbergh would put his wings against the wind, the sea, and the countless miles that separated the new world from the old. By 1930, when Popular Publications brought out their first air magazine, BATTLE ACES, there were a dozen and more competitors and the market was fast becoming overcrowded.

By 1933, BATTLE ACES was nose-diving. It needed some fast thinking to bail it out, and publisher Henry Steeger came to the rescue. The first of the pulp hero magazines, **The Shadow** and **Doc Savage,** had proved to be instant successes. Steeger's Popular Publications had countered with their own larger-than-life hero **The Spider.** Why not, Steeger reasoned, add super hero of the air? The publisher discussed the idea with top air writer Robert J. Hogan and they quickly restyled the mundane BATTLE ACES into G-8 AND HIS BATTLE ACES.

While constructing his first G-8 novel, the Bat Stafel, author Hogan decide that a full-length air war adventure series might bog down without stronger, more bizarre plots. In pulp magazine terms, he conceived the G-8 publication as a hybrid of **Dare-Devil Aces, Amazing Stories** and **Weird Tales.** Even Hogan's titles suggested the fantasmagoria he ladled out: Squadron of Corpses, The Headless Staffel, Scourge of the Sky Beast, Flight From the Grave, Staffel of Invisible Men, The Bloody Wings of the Vampire. To this outre stew Hogan added a hero who, with the aid of disguise, could mask himself in any role. Jaded pulp readers--those hardy souls who enjoyed their yarns considerably larger than life--found the blend irresistable.

The author of the Battle Aces' action-packed encounters, Robert Jasper Hogan, was one of the few men to write pulp hero novels under his own name rather than that of a "house name" supplied by the publisher. Hogan was born in 1897 and raised in Buskirk, New York. A graduate of St. Lawrence University, he served his apprenticeship as a cowpuncher, amateur boxer, piano player, World War One pilot, and airplane salesman, before settling down to a career of writing.

Like many fiction writers, Hogan drew upon his own experiences to fabricate the extravagant plots and outrageous inventions of his pulp yarns. The appellation G-8 came from the name of a ranch the writer had worked on as a young man, Nippy Weston and Bull Martin, G-8's exuberant side-kicks, were based on the characters of bunkroom buddies form this period. And, of course, Hogan's experiences as a pilot in the Signal Corps set the stage for all of the Master Spy's high-flying adventures.

In addition to the lead novels in the G-8 magazine, Hogan also managed to write most of the short stories that filled up the balance of each monthly issue. One series of yarns, supposedly written by 'Greaseball Joe', had its origin in G-8 in December 1936 and continued to the very end. Two other series of shorts, **the Red Falcon** and **Smoke Wade** stories, originally began in **DARE-DEVIL ACES** but crossed over to the G-8 lineup in 1939. The Red Falcon and his Senegalese warrior friend, Sika, were the Lone Ranger and Tonto of the air war pulps, while Smoke Wade was the laconic cowboy skipper of the 66th Pursuit Squadron. A Clint Eastwood of the Western front, Smoke was resurrected in the 1950's by author Hogan in a series of hardcover westerns.

Under his own name, Hogan was also responsible for two other major pulp character magazines: **THE SECRET SIX** and **THE MYSTERIOUS WU FANG.** Although it failed to catch on, The Secret Six was one of the most imaginative of pulp series, while Wu Fang was an entertaining derivative of Sax Rohmer's famous **Fu Manchu** novels. For a short period this amazing wordsmith was producing lead novels (about 60,000 words each) for all three of these books as well as numerous short stories to fill up the back of the magazines. A Reader's Digest article of the time claimed that he sold more words than any other living author.

Hogan was churning out about 200,000 words a month in this period, dictating to two secretaries in his New Jersey home, or typing under a palm tree in a Florida retreat. He worked six days a week, from early morning until lunch time, and in the afternoon again if deadlines demanded. In the evenings he plotted the next day's scenes. He never rewrote or edited anything. He simply mailed the material off to his editors.

As if all his pulp work wasn't enough, Hogan also began a series of hardcover western novels as early as 1942, about twenty of which were published over the years by Dodd, Mead and Houghton, Mifflin. One of his westerns, "Stand at Apache River", was produced as a movie in 1953. Many of his stories were adapted for television, and several of his books have been translated into foreign languages.

Bob Hogan's chief claim to immortality, however, is as sole author of the G-8 stories. While attempts to revive his famous flying spy have had little effect (notably a series of Berkley paperbacks and a 1966 Dell one-shot comic), pulp fans and collectors remain loyal.

In today's age of ecological horrors and threatening nuclear Armageddon, who can blame nostalgic readers for wanting to recall a time when the worst the fates could muster was the Squadron of the Flying Dead, The Devil's Sky Trap, or perhaps a simple yarn involving hordes of giant man-carrying bats from the Matto Grosso?

With a gent like G-8 on your side, that was but the best of all possible worlds.